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JEE (MAINS) HELD AMID STRINGENT PRECAUTIONS

National-level entrance exam for admission to engg colleges began on Tuesday with strict social distancing measures

VIGIL TO KEEP THE DEADLY VIRUS AWAY

Staggered entry and exit for candidates, sanitisers at the gate, distribution of masks and maintaining social distancing as candidates queued up, were among the scenes witnessed at the exam centres across the country. The exam, which has been postponed twice in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, is being held from September 1 to 6 | P8

FLOOD-HIT STUDENTS TO GET 2ND CHANCE

- Flood-hit Maharashtra and West Bengal said many students could not take the exam. The Nagpur bench of the Bombay HC said those who could not reach exam centres can seek re-test
- The exam was amid protests from Opposition parties and a section of students against holding it in the midst of a pandemic

9 lakh
THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES WHO HAVE REGISTERED FOR JEE-MAINS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARWAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Amid talks, China made fresh attempt to alter LAC status quo

Indian Army foiled second aggression; brigade commander meeting inconclusive

PUSHKAR BANAKAR & MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

Amid tensions along the LAC with China, an Army convoy moves on the Srinagar-Ladakh highway at Gagangeer in Kashmir's Ganderbal district on Tuesday | PTI

INDIA on Tuesday said the Chinese side resorted to aggression on Monday at the south bank of the Pangong Tso along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) even as commander-level talks were on to resolve the fresh face-off.

"On August 31, even as the ground commanders of the two sides were in discussions to de-escalate the situation, the Chinese troops again engaged in provocative action. Due to the timely defensive action, the Indian side was able to prevent these attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo," Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said.

Amid fresh tensions, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a meeting with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and the Army top brass. The meeting went for about two hours. Jaishankar, Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and Army Chief M M Naravane participated.

The Director General Military Operations, the operations head of the Army, too, attended the meeting, according to an officer. "The meeting was held to analyse the current situation and discuss the future course of all military and diplomatic options," he said.

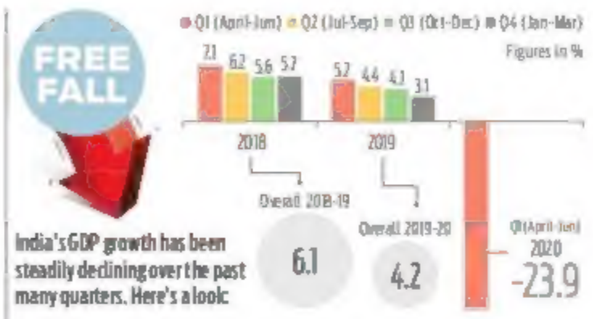
India has consolidated its position by occupying the heights on the southern bank of the Pangong Tso. "It was a preemptive move after we observed Chinese movement towards the area along with heavy machinery to create infrastructure," sources said.

The second brigade commander-level meeting in as many days on Tuesday was inconclusive with China accusing India of entering its territory, an allegation the Indian side rejected.

Meanwhile, Chinese Embassy spokesperson Ji Rong accused India of flagrant provocations on August 31. "India's move has grossly violated China's territorial sovereignty, seriously violated relevant agreements, protocols and important consensus reached between the two countries, and severely damaged peace and tranquillity along the China-India border areas. Similar accusations of trespassing the LAC were made by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying while Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who is on a trip to Europe, said that the problem has arisen as the two countries do not have a clearly demarcated border. P8

Appropriate defensive measures taken: MEA

In response to provocative military maneuvers by China late night on Aug 29 and 30, "the Indian side took appropriate defensive measures to safeguard our interests and defend the territorial integrity," the MEA said



GST mop-up down, auto, mfg sectors up

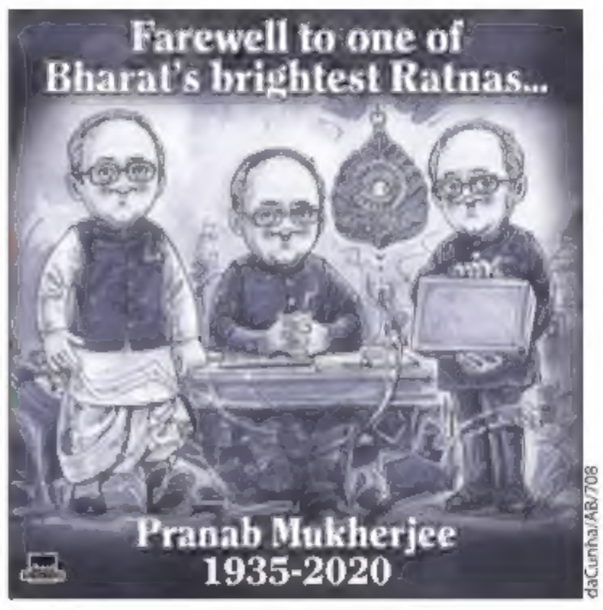
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THREE sets of data released on Tuesday offered a glimpse into the state of the country's economy.

GST collection for August fell both on a year-on-year basis as well as sequentially. On an annual basis, the August mop-up at ₹86,449 crore was 12% lower compared to ₹98,202 crore recorded in the same month last year. Experts, however, say the drop in indirect tax collection is due to reduced imports and that the latest revenue figure is actually impressive as it shows domestic economic activity is on the mend.

GST collections have faltered since the beginning of the current fiscal as Covid-19-induced lockdown disrupted economic activity. The revenue collected in April was ₹32,172 crore, ₹62,151 crore in May, ₹90,917 crore in June and ₹87,422 crore in July.

Meanwhile, India's manufacturing sector activity re-entered the growth territory in August. The IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index rose from 46 in July to 52 in August, signalling an improvement after four consecutive months of contraction. With economic activity picking up pace, energy use is also gradually going up across the country. According to power consumption data released on Tuesday, 110.57 billion units were consumed in August, almost similar to the level as last year. P12



K'taka weighs borrowing options, may decide today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

EVEN as the Opposition-ruled states have publicly rejected the GST Council's two borrowing options for states to make good the GST compensation shortfall, BJP-ruled Karnataka is yet to decide on its course of action.

An impromptu meeting held at Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's official residence 'Cauvery' on Tuesday, where the state's representative to the GST Council and Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Chief Secretary T M Vijaya Bhaskar and Additional Chief Secretary-Finance I S N Prasad were present to discuss and weigh in both options, remained inconclusive. The CM has called for another meeting on Wednesday to zero in on the way forward. CONTINUED ON: P7

AGR dues can be cleared in 10 years: SC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday gave telecom firms 10 years to clear their Adjusted Gross Revenue dues, estimated to be around ₹1.6 lakh crore. A three-judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra said the firms will have to pay 10% of the dues by March 31, 2021. Thereafter, they will have to pay an instalment by February 7 every successive year.

The bench said non-payment of instalments will not just accrue interest but also invite contempt of court proceedings and added it had extended the timeframe of repayment due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Telcos' MDs and chairmen were also ordered to furnish personal affidavits, undertaking compliance of the SC's order.

The bench agreed with telcos' submission that the National Company Law Tribunal and not the Supreme Court should decide whether spectrum can be a subject matter of dispute resolution under IBC.

TOUGH ROAD AHEAD | P12

FAREWELL, STATESMAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays his last respects to former President Pranab Mukherjee in New Delhi on Tuesday | PIB | REPORT: P9

JEE MAINS GETS UNDER WAY AMID STRICT COVID PRECAUTIONS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE Joint Entrance Examination (JEE-Main) for admission to top engineering institutes began on Tuesday amid stringent precautionary measures in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. The exams were earlier postponed twice due to the prevailing situation.

The National Testing Agency, which conducts the examination, stepped up safety protocols, and even those checking the students were seen in PPE kits at a centre in Bengaluru. Masks were provided to the students at the exam centres.

In all, 43,894 will write the examinations at 33 centres in Karnataka until September 6.

However, the number of students who wrote the examination will only be known cumulatively after the last paper is done, said a source from the HRD department.

The low number of students on Tuesday was due to the papers — B.Arch. and B.Planning — which are attempted by architecture students. The major lot of students are scheduled to start arriving from Wednesday.

The examination which is held in two shifts – 9am to 12 noon and 3pm to 6pm — is a Computer-Based Test (CBT).

Although the exam centres were increased from 570 to 660 throughout the country, students who attempted the examination on the first day were inconvenienced as the BE examination that they would attempt on day two was at another location. This comes in the middle of the pandemic, where students are trying to minimise their movement. P2

Can you be reinfected by Covid if you've recovered from it once already? How long after you notice symptoms can you afford to wait before you rush to a hospital? If the virus keeps mutating over time, will the upcoming Covid vaccine still be effective? Six months of on-again, off-again lockdowns later, the average Indian still has a whole load of basic questions about the virus. To address them, **TNIE Editor G S Vasu** spoke to renowned gastroenterologist and Padma Bhushan awardee **Dr D Nageshwar Reddy**. The Hyderabad-based Chairman of the Asian Institute of Gastroenterology sought to dial down the panic, spoke on how wearing masks can achieve 90% effect of lockdown, and why India's numbers are likely to be 5x higher than we think.

Scan the QR code or watch it on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUGKK4KjyLM

For transcript on TNIE site, go to https://bit.ly/3bh6fJX

EXPRESS READ

HC sets Kafeel Khan free, quashes charges

Lucknow: The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday dropped all charges under the National Security Act (NSA) against Dr Kafeel Khan, who was detained for his speech during the anti-CAA protests on the Aligarh Muslim University campus in December last year. While the speech was delivered on December 12, Dr Khan was arrested at the Mumbai airport by the UP Special Task Force on January 29. P10

Centre to issue SOPs for running of metro trains

New Delhi: The Union Urban Affairs Ministry is likely to issue detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs) on Wednesday for the functioning of metro trains under the 'Unlock 4' guidelines. Metro trains will be allowed to operated in a graded manner.

Payment of loan moratorium extendable by 2 yrs

New Delhi: The moratorium period on repayment of loans during the Covid-19 pandemic is "extendable" by two years and several steps have been taken to help the stressed sectors, the Centre and the RBI told the Supreme Court on Tuesday. P9

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